AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A seal assembly for a reciprocating shaft, comprising:

a body having a bore;

a shaft adapted to move reciprocally within the body between an extended position extending from the body and a retracted position retracted within the body, wherein the shaft is a ram shaft of a blow out preventer;

at least one first circumferential seal positioned in the body and circumscribing the shaft, the first circumferential seal performing a sealing function of preventing well fluids from migrating along the shaft from a first region of the body to a second region of the body positioned immediately adjacent to the first region, the shaft having a first seal travel area which is in contact with the first seal during axial reciprocating movement of the shaft, at least a portion of the first seal travel area extending from the body where it is exposed to contaminants when the shaft is in the extended position;

at least one second circumferential seal positioned in the body and circumscribing the shaft in axially spaced relation to the first circumferential seal, the second circumferential seal performing the same sealing function as the first circumferential seal, and serving as a redundant back up seal ~~which serves no active sealing function~~ until the first circumferential seal experiences seal failure, wherein the configuration of the second circumferential seal relative to the first circumferential seal prevents a total seal loss of the first circumferential seal and prevents well fluids from flowing past the first circumferential seal in the event of a blow out of the first circumferential seal, the shaft having a second seal travel area which is in contact with the second seal during axial reciprocating movement of the shaft, the second seal area remaining sheltered within the body even when the shaft is in the extended position; and

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the first seal travel area and the second seal travel area being axially spaced separate and distinct areas on the shaft, such that damage to the exposed portion of the first seal travel area leading to a failure of the at least one first circumferential seal does not lead to failure of the at least one second circumferential seal, as the second circumferential seal engages the second seal travel area which is separate and distinct from the first seal travel area.

2. (Cancelled)

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